

Change Afoot at Police Department

A reduced crime rate, a new look in cruisers, a web site, and new community programs are some of the changes apparent in the police department lately.

Chief Mark DeLuca discussed the state's recently released crime statistics for Duxbury on Monday, the best in the past 20 years with a 36 percent clearance rate.

The Massachusetts crime rate dropped overall 5.5 percent last year with similar numbers on most of the South Shore according to statistics released last week by the executive office of public safety.

In Duxbury last year, so-called part one crimes, which include rape, assaults, breaking and entering, larceny, and motor vehicle theft totalled 86, a drop from the 138 part one crimes reported in 1998.

More significant was the crime clearance rate of 31 in 1999 as opposed to 28 in 1998. A 17 percent improvement over the previous year. Specifically last year, part one crimes included: one rape with one clearance; 15 assaults with 14 clearances; 25 reported breaking and entering with 12 clearances; 42 larcenies with 24 clearances; three motor vehicle thefts with no clearances.

DeLuca attributes the improvement to increased patrols and better training. He also credited his department for "working as a team" and taking pride in what they do. "This has been a team effort all the way. These officers keep their skills sharp through training. If you keep busy and interested then you don't get stale and lazy."

He said he believed morale in the department was positive.

Sergeant Roger Banfill echoed the fact saying this week, "Morale is very high. The officers are excited and everybody is involved in making things happen."

Physical fitness is also an important component of the department's focus, the chief said. This summer bicycle patrols will supplement the motorcycle and regular patrols which will be enhanced with special summer officers.

Several new initiatives undertaken by the department target areas of concern.

The department recently purchased a digital speed display screen which is moved to different spots in town as part of a major crackdown on speeders.

Police have also sent a message to teenagers and adults that zero tolerance for alcohol abuse will be strictly enforced.

Recent sting operations at businesses serving to minors highlighted the crackdown. Underrage drinking parties are also targets of police who work closely with the schools and rely on tips.

The department has also instituted a web site which gives weekly updates of department news and offers a tip line. The web site is, www.duxbury.police.org.

This summer, DeLuca plans to initiate a two-week Junior Police Academy where young people between the ages of 12 and 16 can interact with police at the station, ride the cruisers, participate in physical fitness and get a first hand look at police work.

The program comes on the heels of the Police Athletic League youth center at DHS.

Also new at the station is the Chief's Outstanding Public Service award which was awarded recently to fifth grader Christine Drummey for her efforts in collecting stuffed animals for distribution to kids involved in ambulance transport and other traumatic emergency

situations in town.

On Monday, the shiny new black and white Ford Crown Victoria with gold lettering signaled the soon to be complete new look in cruisers, a change from the traditional gray and blue.

Sgt. Banfill said the response to the change has been positive.

"The new look stands out better. The department is pleased with it," he said.

Also added to the department fleet is a new Ford Expedition four wheel drive vehicle for use near the beach and in rough terrain. The vehicle is fully equipped with emergency equipment including bullet proof vests, flares and flotation devices. The police also have new jackets to go along with the new look and the overall positive facelift throughout the department.